

CARMARTHENSHIRE LBAP

BROWNFIELD, GARDENS AND URBAN OPEN SPACE GROUPED ACTION PLAN

Introduction

This grouped habitat includes the Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land, urban open space and garden habitats.

Open mosaic habitats on previously developed land (*Brithwaith o gynefinoedd agored ar dir a oedd cynt*

wedi ei ddatblygu - 'brownfield' habitat)

includes land that is or was once occupied by industrial or other human uses but which has now become disused, derelict or is currently unoccupied (in some cases they may still be in use). Such sites might include former colliery sites, disused quarries, spoil tips, restored opencast sites, pulverised fuel-ash (pfa) and metaliferous slag substrates, demolished or derelict factory sites, industrial lagoons, derelict railway land, redundant dockland, contaminated land, former refuse tips, etc. This land may occur in both built-up and rural settings.



Brownfield sites can often remain unused for many years and recolonisation by plants and animals on these undisturbed areas can lead to the development of a diverse flora and fauna with a complex succession of habitats forming a mosaic (patchwork), from bare ground to grassland, scrub and woodland. These areas often provide alternative habitats for many species that have declined due to loss of their native habitats in the wider countryside because of intensification of agriculture and urbanisation. Often the biodiversity value of these areas is underestimated and can be important for many species, especially plants, birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles (herpetiles) and invertebrates.

Remnants of original habitats may remain within post-industrial sites which, although isolated and fragmented, can be important for biodiversity and act as a vital local genetic resource for re-colonisation of disturbed areas. They can act as wildlife corridors in otherwise built-up or urban areas as well as providing valuable habitat in otherwise species-poor rural situations. Species may be introduced in dumped soil and ballast and exotic species may grow that are more often associated with other habitats or countries; these species may reflect the area's past international trade and could be seen to have some cultural value, e.g. certain annual species at Burry Port and Pembrey.

These areas are often valued by local people for casual recreation, such as for dog walking and often have informal amenity value. Research findings indicate that nature plays a vital role in human health and well-being, and that parks and nature reserves play a significant role by providing access to nature for individuals. There is compelling evidence that contact with nature can help maintain good physical health and recovery from illness, alleviate stress and mental health problems and enhance social interaction and improve community cohesion.

In recent years, brownfield sites have become increasingly recognized nationally as important havens for wildlife. They often support protected species and may now carry designations in order to safeguard such species. However, increasing numbers are being designated on their

own merit as habitats of importance develop. These include, for example, sites of former alkali tips, pulverised fuel-ash (pfa) lagoons, coal-spoil tips and gravel pits.

Many brownfield sites in Carmarthenshire are richer in the number of species (whether plant, bird or insect) than large swathes of the intensively farmed countryside. One former settling lagoon at Pwll of the former Burry Port Power Station is actually a Site of Special Scientific Interest by virtue of an extraordinary mix of fenland and woodland plants, whilst another site nearby ('Ashpits Pond') is important for its wildfowl.

The majority of post industrial sites in Carmarthenshire occur in the south-east of the county, particularly on the Coalfield and the limestone quarrying areas, although most towns have derelict or development sites which are within the scope of this habitat definition.

Over recent years **gardens and allotments** have become increasingly important habitats for wildlife, including many species now rare in the wider countryside. Gardens and allotments can also be important wildlife corridors. In our towns, a large proportion of available wildlife habitat is provided by gardens, which are the 'green lungs' of our urban environment.

Gardens also play an important role in allowing people to have close contact with nature. However many gardening practices are detrimental from a biodiversity perspective and more work is needed to encourage wildlife-friendly gardening. For example, the use of peat has a detrimental effect on our peatland habitats.

As the wider environment loses species, gardens provide a refuge for a huge variety of birds and insects. Other species such as hedgehogs and amphibians may now have significant strongholds in urban back gardens.

Allotments can also cover a significant area of land in towns and can therefore make a valuable contribution to the wildlife potential of urban areas. The diversity of habitats found in allotments – cultivated and fallow ground, grassy areas, empty overgrown plots, compost heaps, sheds etc – make them important for a wide range of plants and animals. Allotments offer benefits for the whole community and contribute to the sustainable regeneration of towns and cities, providing green areas in urban environments.

Urban open space is a term used to describe parks, green spaces, and other open areas such as playing fields. They can be highly managed environments or relatively natural areas. They are commonly open to public access.

These areas are important because they offer good recreational opportunities for people. They can be islands of nature, supporting biodiversity and providing a habitat for natural species in environments that are otherwise uninhabitable due to urban development. Appropriately managed urban open spaces can be places where local communities can enjoy nature in an urban setting.

Carmarthenshire's towns have some good examples of parks and open spaces. Parc Howard in Llanelli contrasts with the more newly created open space within the Millennium Coastal Park. Betws Park in Ammanford is a good example of formal gardens alongside the natural river habitat with rough grassland at the end of the park. Small settlements have areas of recreational open space containing play sports areas. In Llandeilo Parc Penlan has recently been given Green Flag status and hopefully will start a trend of managing parks for biodiversity as well as more formal recreation.

A key aim of conserving biodiversity where people live is to enable them to have positive/enjoyable contact with everyday wildlife, from sparrows in the park, to butterflies in the garden and frogspawn in the local pond, with the ultimate objective that people will find nature such an inseparable part of their lives that they will be prepared to use their time, energy and influence to conserve it.

Natural benefits of 'brownfield' habitats

As well as the inherent value of these habitats and for the species they support they provide us with a number of natural benefits:

- Green Infrastructure: biodiversity-rich brownfield sites have potential to deliver high quality green infrastructure, for people and wildlife.
- Brownfield sites can provide valuable opportunities for people to have access to the wildlife on their doorstep
- Urban green spaces can provide a cooling effect to the local environment, clean the air and reduce noise.
- Brownfield sites can help with flood storage.
- Urban green space/brownfield sites can help store carbon.

Why are urban/brownfield habitats changing (from the *State of Nature* report: www.rspb.org.uk/stateofnature)?

- Fragmentation of habitat – loss of wildlife corridors.
- Loss of green space.
- Tidier gardening.
- Development.
- Water and air pollution.
- Non-native species.
- Climate change.

Vision statement and objectives

Our vision for these habitats is to maintain and enhance the wildlife value and potential of brownfield habitats, gardens and other urban open spaces, and increase awareness of their importance for biodiversity, and the opportunities they provide for public engagement with conservation at a local level. Any action would seek to meet one or more of the following objectives:

- BR1** To ensure there is the right amount of appropriate quality open space in the right places in built up areas of Carmarthenshire to provide for biodiversity and people's need to have contact with it.
- BR2** To survey, retain and positively manage brownfield habitats in Carmarthenshire that support BAP/S42 habitats and species.
- BR3** To increase the number of wildlife-friendly features in parks/gardens/schools in the county.
- BR4** To increase the number of allotments in Carmarthenshire.
- BR5** To maintain and expand the range and/or population of species associated with these habitat types.
- BR6** To raise awareness of brownfield habitats and the benefits they bring us
- BR7** To survey key brownfield sites and associated BAP species.

Associated species (NB this may not an exhaustive list!):

Birds - Common linnet, Yellowhammer, Herring gull, Common starling, Northern lapwing, House sparrow, Song thrush, Hedge sparrow, Kestrel, Ringed plover

Mammals - Brown hare, Hedgehog, Bat spp.

Invertebrates -Small Blue, Dingy Skipper, Grayling, Wall, Dark Spinach (moth), V-moth, The Cinnabar (moth), Brown-banded carder bee

Reptiles - Slow worm, Common toad, Common lizard, Grass snake, Adder

Plants/lower plants - Cornflower, Deptford Pink, Darnel, Pennyroyal, Bird's Nest, Round-headed club rush, Small-flowered catchfly, Lead-moss, Maidenhair fern

Summary of action achieved by LBAP Partners (for more information contact the biodiversity officer – Biodiversity@carmarthenshire.gov.uk) or visit the national Biodiversity Action Reporting System - <http://ukbars.defra.gov.uk>:

2010–12

- Penlan Park, Llyn Llech Owain and Gelli Aur Country Parks designated Green Flag parks – CCC BR3
- Bryngwyn school – wildlife area created (CCW grant funding) – Wildlife Trust BR3
- Creation of allotments – e.g. Dinefwr (NT), St David’s Park (CCC), Llwynhendy, Ammanford BR5
- Brownfield sites mapped in the county – CCC BR7
- Lead-moss *Ditrichum plumbicola* - site in Rhandirmwyn designated as a SSSI – CCW BR5
- Management plan prepared for Bird’s nest (*Monotropa*) at Ash Pits Pond area, Llanelli-CCC BR5
- Production of a wildlife gardening leaflet – CCC BR6
- Walks and talks on urban/brownfield and wildlife gardening – CCC/Llanelli Nats
- Restoration of Tir-y-dial tip underway – planning condition BR2
- ‘Best practice’ allotment created at NBGW BR6
- Tree planting DVD produced for schools – CBP BR6
- Inset training for 20 schools – biodiversity planning for school grounds BR6

2013

- Liaison with Saron School over nature area – project ideas planned – CCC BR3
- ‘Conservation’ meadow areas created in Llanelli – CCC BR3
- Access maintained at Morfa Berwig water vole site – KWT/CCC BR1/2
- Prepared project outline for strategic pollinator project through Community Strategy - CCC BR1

2014

- Pollinator planting scheme for housing sites around the county – CCC BR3
- Sites managed as hay meadows on CCC land – CCC BR3

2015

- Pollinator-friendly planting around housing sites in the county – CCC BR3
- Sites managed as hay meadows on CCC land – CCC BR3
- Habitat management at Morfa Berwig to enhance brownfield habitat – CCC/ARC/Buglife BR2
- Development of a pilot project to develop natural resource management plans for local communities – Ferryside, Dafen, Bynea - CCC BR1

Future proposed action

- Create an area of public open space at the edge of Carmarthen – CCC/NRW BR1
- Designation of Morfa Berwig water vole site as Local Nature Reserve - CCC BR1
- Invertebrate survey of Morfa Berwig - CCC BR7
- Habitat management creation for inverts/herpetiles/birds within MCP, LNRs and country parks – CCC/Buglife/ARC/RSPB/BCT BR2/3
- Continue project to develop natural resource management plans for local communities BR1

Where to visit these habitats in Carmarthenshire:

Brownfield sites: Pwll Lagoon SSSI and Ashpits Pond, Burry Port; Morfa Berwig Water Vole site, Bynea; Mynydd Mawr Woodland Park, Tumble; Nant-y-Ci Recreation Park.

Parks: Parc Howard, Llanelli, Betws Park, Ammanford; Penlan Park, Llandeilo, Millennium Coastal Park, Llanelli.

Useful links

www.buglife.org.uk/conservation/currentprojects/Habitats+Action/Brownfields

www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife/habitats/towns-and-gardens

www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife/habitats/brownfield

www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/en-GB/Urban



Partneriaeth Bioamrywiaeth Sir Gaerfyrddin
Carmarthenshire Biodiversity Partnership

www.carmarthenshirebiodiversity.co.uk

The [Carmarthenshire Biodiversity Partnership](#) (CBP) is made up of the following organisations: [Carmarthenshire County Council](#) (CCC), [Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales](#) (WTSWW), [Natural Resources Wales](#) (NRW), [RSPB](#), [Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust](#) (WWT), [Carmarthenshire Bird Club](#) (CBC), [National Botanic Gardens Wales](#) (NBGW), [Butterfly Conservation](#) (BC), [Carmarthenshire Rivers Trust](#) (CRT), [National Trust](#) (NT), [Botanical Society of the British Isles](#) (BSBI), [Llanelli Naturalists](#) (LN), [Bat Conservation Trust](#) (BCT), [West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre](#) (WWBIC), [Amphibian and Reptile Conservation](#) (ARC), [Woodland Trust](#) (WT)